

SINCE the update in the last edition of *The Australian TAFE Teacher* we have been trying to progress our log of claims with the Department. We have been negotiating in good faith and attempting to get some agreement as to the wording of some of the clauses that would form the basis of our new Certified Agreement.

In the last two weeks all the effort and work that has been put into the negotiations by the negotiating team and TAFE Committee have been torn up by the Department. They have removed items from the table on which we thought that we had in principle agreement and have indicated that they are going to take the

matter to arbitration.

In an attempt to get the negotiations back on track we informed the Commissioner that the TAFE Committee would make a submission as to a final offer of settlement to the Department, with the Department's response to be forwarded to the Union and the Commission. The response from the Department was to remove further conditions that had been placed on the table in the last two offers.

At the time of writing we are waiting to here from the Commission as to the next date for the discussion of these matters. It appears that we will not see a salary increase or improvement in

conditions for TAFE Lecturers in the near future despite massive budget surpluses in the state budgets. (Our last salary increase was in January 2007). It would appear that we are in for a long dragged-out fight with the Department.

On a brighter note, our TAFE Organiser, Ramona Mitussis, is going on maternity leave shortly. Ramona will be missed during the fight with the Department, but on behalf of all members of the TAFE family that know Ramona I wish her and her partner the very best in the coming months.

*Gary Hedger is the union rep at Challenger TAFE and member of NTCE.*

